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Beach Cities Edition



Hail to the Decorator

Get an exclusive look inside the SoCal home of the Obamas' fave designer: Michael S. Smith

Get Organized!

Two top pros tell us how

March/April 2009


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Above: Designer Michael S. Smith's Bel Air home was designed by New York architect Oscar Shamamian. "I love Georgian architecture for its quiet blend of dignity and elegance," Smith says. "The old brick has a softness that conveys age, and Oscar added lovely period details like the rusticated brick window surround. From the outside, it looks like a two-story house but that window actually illuminates a double-height entrance hall. I think there should be a sense of ceremony as you walk up to a front door, and the classical columns and portico help create it."

Photo above and cover photo by Simon Upton.

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Change you can believe in



Barbara Jones

Wherever you go these days, people are talking about change. We've adopted the buzzword of the presidential campaign as our own mantra as we try to bring balance to our lives.

Yet change can be daunting—the thought of all that work can derail even the best intentions. That's why we hope to make things easier with our "Get Organized" features, offering tips for taking stock and capitalizing on what we already have. Our nationally respected experts, Mark Brunetz (of "Clean House" fame) and Jennifer Humes (known as "The Clutter Queen"), take a common-sense approach to restoring order, offering doable suggestions that produce dramatic results.

Speaking of dramatic and beautiful décor—as well as presidential change—this issue also takes a look at Michael S. Smith, the renowned L.A. designer selected to decorate the private White House residence of President Barack Obama. Famous for his creative and polished designs, Smith invites us into his own Bel Air home for an exclusive look at how he organizes timeless, global-chic furniture and accessories to create harmony in every room.

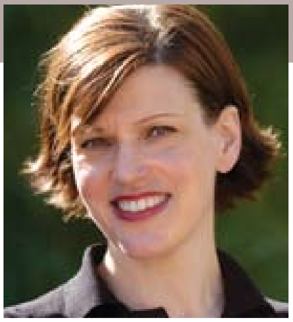
And we at *Spaces* have taken the theme of organization to heart and done some reorganizing of our own. We've expanded our single "So Cal So Cool" feature into an entire section focusing on cutting-edge trends, beautiful furnishings and sleek, high-function products for the home. We've also launched the feature "Shop Treatment," which will spotlight local venues for must-have furnishings and accessories.

I'm proud of this issue of *Spaces*—not only because it's my first one as editor, but because of the strong content and beautiful images produced by our talented journalists and photographers. And we'll continue to look for ways to enrich the magazine as we set out to capture the essence of Southern California living.



Have a good story idea to share? Comments about the magazine? Write to me at spaceseditor@langnews.com.

contributors



Sandra Barrera enjoys pursuing functional, stylish spaces—and the more sustainable, the better. She's had the privilege of visiting some beautiful homes as a features writer for the *Los Angeles Daily News*, where she's been covering design, fashion and entertainment since 2000. She lives in South Pasadena with her husband, C.J., and their daughter, Sophia.



Natalie Haughton thrives on exploring restaurants, both locally and in her travels, and is a self-described chocophile who loves to indulge in sinful desserts. As food editor at the *Los Angeles Daily News* for more than 25 years, she has judged numerous national cooking contests. Her sixth cookbook, released in January, is *Slow & Easy: Fast-Fix Recipes for Your Electric Slow Cooker* (Wiley Publishing).



David Crane has spent most of his life looking through a camera, having been inspired by his grandfather to pursue photography. A graduate of the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, he is currently a staff photographer at the *Los Angeles Daily News*. His professional accolades include being named Photographer of the Year by the National Press Photographers Association.


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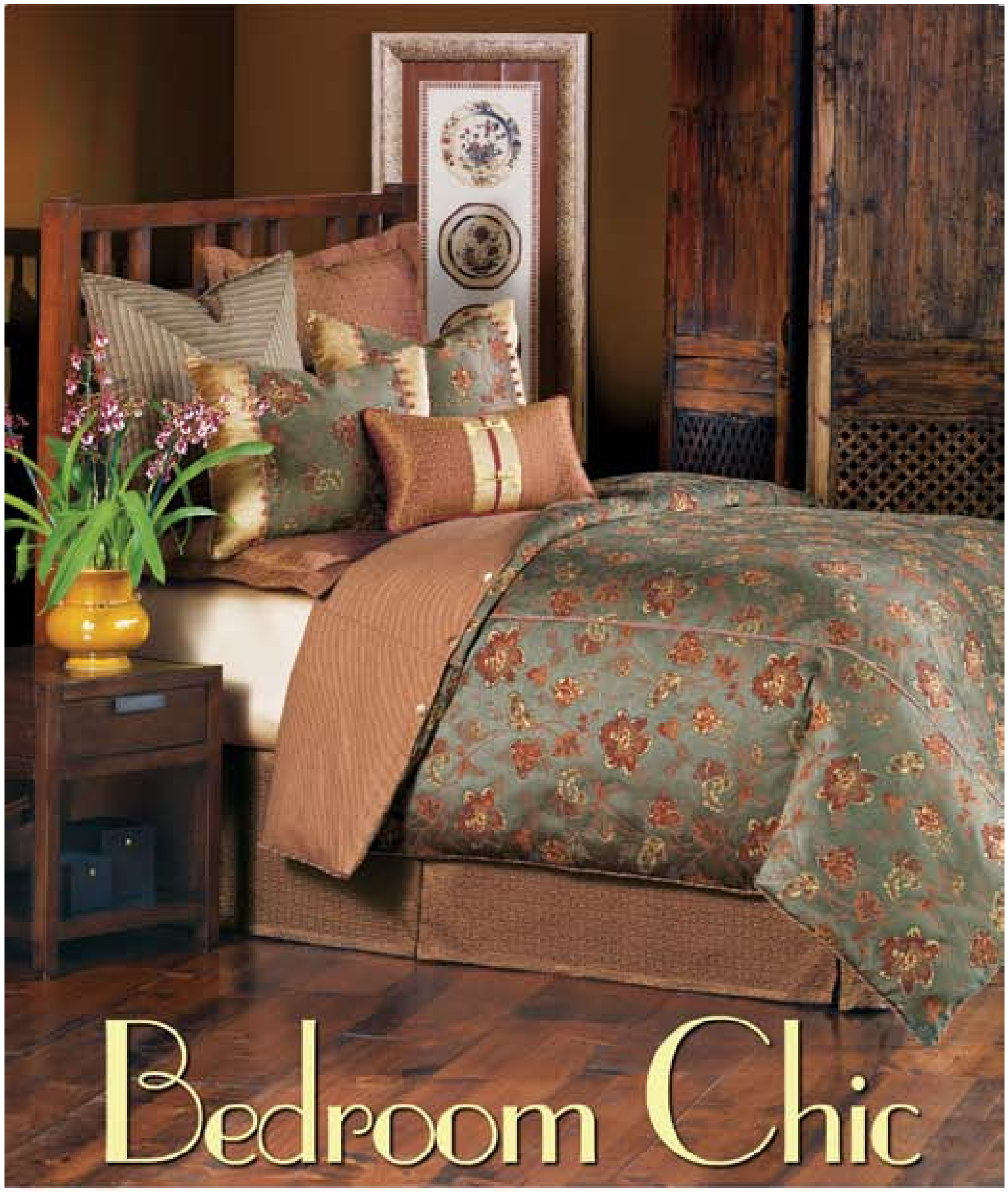
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SoCal so cool



Now sea here

Beachy is chic at this South Bay boutique

Story and photos by Melissa Heckscher



Furnishings made of natural materials, like these stone candleholders ($25-$35 each), and those with a nautical theme are among the eclectic offerings favored by boutique owner Melissa Enriquez Roy, top.

With a daring color palette and a smattering of one-of-a-kind items, Sur La Mer is an upscale home furnishings boutique that, owner Melissa Enriquez Roy concedes, is a love-it-or-hate-it sort of place. Of course, Roy hopes that most people will lean toward loving the cozy Manhattan Beach shop she set up four years ago.

"People looking for a very safe design probably aren't going to like this store," Roy

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A cozy sofa ($3,800) and faux fur throw ($385) create a snug sanctuary in any setting.

"I think the design color palette always follows what's hot in fashion, and those colors for summer are bright orange, bright yellow, kelly green and hot pink."



says of Sur La Mer (French for "On the Sea"), located a few blocks from the ocean. "This is the kind of store geared toward people who have a little bit more of a creative input in their style and who don't necessarily want something that everybody else has."

Consequently, those looking for unique items with a beachy chic sort of style—furnishings that suggest both the breezy ambiance of an oceanfront home and the homey warmth of a Lake Tahoe cabin—will find a cornucopia of possibilities. "I used to describe it as luxury beach house, but I feel like it's gone even further than that," Roy says. "It covers a broad range of styles, but it's definitely eclectic."

Roy's goal, she says, is to offer high-quality items—"pieces that feel authentic and found rather than bought in a mall"—at reasonable prices. Her favorites include a coffee table made from the trunk of a palm tree, a solid teak dining table from Indonesia and a bright orange wooden cabinet imported from China.

"The trends I see coming are reclaimed woods, lots of Lucite, and re-purposed furniture," she says. "In the beach cities, bright colors are always popular. I think the design color palette always follows what's hot in fashion, and those colors for summer are bright orange, bright yellow, kelly green and hot pink."

Now living on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Roy dove headfirst into interior design after leaving a job with a technology company in New York City. Before that, she had decorated for friends and family—but never professionally—so opening her store was a risk. With a steady stream of local clients and four interior designers available for consultations and renovations, it appears to have paid off.

"When I moved to Manhattan Beach, I couldn't find anything other than shabby chic or things that didn't suit me or my husband," she says. "I decided to open a store that had everything that I like."



Lush accent rugs by Company C add a dash of color and texture (prices vary).





Mark Brunetz brings a critical eye to every design task, from choosing the perfect color to reorganizing an entire room.

Mr. Clean

L.A.'s Mark Brunetz shares some life-changing ways to whip our homes into shape

By Sandra Barrera

"I don't mean to sound like the organizational Nazi here, but you should be able to find everything in your house." So says Mark Brunetz, co-host of "Clean House," the top-rated program on The Style Network.

In between taping his cable TV show and settling into the 1938 Spanish-style home he recently purchased in Glendale, Brunetz took time to speak with us about the best ways to get—and stay—organized.

He's become quite an expert on the subject.



TIP: Use furnishings that are also storage—like a coffee table that can hold seasonal throws.



TIP: Arrange furniture and accent pieces to create balance.



TIP: In every room of your home, position your primary workstations in the shape of a triangle.

In addition to "Clean House," Brunetz has co-authored a pair of books, scheduled for release in 2010, that deal with the issues of clutter and organization from the inside out.

Psychoanalyzing homeowners is just the latest gig for the Cleveland native. After earning his master's degree in exercise physiology, Brunetz relocated to Los Angeles to work on Jane Fonda's breakout series of workout videos. He later teamed up with his college pal, award-winning actress Sandra Bullock, at Fortis Films, which produced "While You Were Sleeping" and the "George Lopez Show."

As Brunetz pursues his "third" career as a designer, here are some of his observations, and some solid advice, about getting organized.

What's a good trick for organizing different rooms of the home?

Are you familiar with the "magic triangle?" You position your primary workstations in the shape of a triangle. One of the things that I've been doing is creating a magic triangle of storage.

Can you give an example?

In the family room, I really look to use furnishings that are also storage. A good example of the triangle might be a TV armoire that holds not only the TV, but also DVDs and books. A storage chest can serve as the coffee table and might hold seasonal throws or pillows. Another thing I love to do is put a bedroom dresser into a family room because it has drawers. It makes a wonderful credenza table where you can put a lamp and everything you would normally put on a console table, but, as you know, sofa tables don't have drawers. And, rather than storage just being in one place—which has the tendency to overflow—if people can distribute it evenly into a triangular pattern they'll know where things are and they'll have access to it.

What's your recommendation for buying drawer dividers or storage containers?

We're big fans of The Container Store. We use their products on our show, and the cool thing about them is they have designers on staff. But what you want to go in with is not, 'Design a closet for me.' What you want to go in with is, 'Look, I ski ... I have sweaters ... I'm a big fan of purses ... I don't have a lot of shoes but I love to hang my T-shirts.' When you've thought that through, it's easy for someone to jump on board and assist you. But when you go in like a deer caught in the headlights, then what you're going to get is a closet that everybody gets. And guess what? It will end up cluttered.

For all of us parents, how do you suggest we store toys?

Use a storage rack or a bookshelf with bins on it. Take pictures of the toys—soldiers, balls, whatever—laminate them and clip then onto the ends of the bins. That way, when the kids pull out their stuff, they know which bin it goes into; they can match it up.

In your experience on "Clean House," what room needs to be organized more than others?

Probably the bedroom. It's not as public as other rooms. People feel like they can close the door and go away. It seems counter-intuitive because you think, 'Oh, my gosh, people really need to create a sanctuary and be able to escape from the world.' No. The No. 1 problem we see is the ripple effect. Whether it's loss of intimacy in the relationship or just being with their spouse after so many years, they're adding to the problem by cluttering up their bedrooms. I would have to say we probably makeover 60 to 70 percent of bedrooms on our show for that very reason.

So how does getting organized help?

People need to understand in simple terms what's important to them and how they want to live. If they just can get clear on that, things in their house will be very different.


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Clutter Queen comes clean

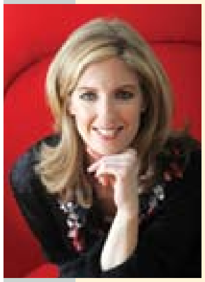


PHOTO: ALLISON V. SMITH

Jennifer Humes, a.k.a. "The Clutter Queen," is regularly featured in national magazines along with her tips on getting—and staying—organized. Here, exclusively for our "Get Organized" issue, she offers *Spaces* readers her top 10 ways to banish clutter from our homes.

Stop using non-removable labels or tape that can be messy or fade over time. Invest in a label maker and several different types of labeling tape. You'll immediately know the contents of bins, boxes or other containers, and your family won't have to decipher your handwriting.

Annually organize and clean out the active areas of your life: closet, bathroom and kitchen. This is an excellent way to remind yourself of what you have. You may not have to go shopping for new things after all.

Get rid of everything you don't regularly wear. Seriously. It's not the end of the world so why waste the space on unused items?

Never keep something simply because you received it as a gift or from another family member. If you don't love it, don't keep it. It's that simple.

Return all those products you thought were going to help you get organized but you still haven't used. Purchasing organizing products before you organize is not organizing. Waiting to see what needs storage first is.

If a furnishing or accessory doesn't work in one room, try using it in another. For items in transition, store them in the garage, attic or basement.

Put things away after you use them (i.e., your toothbrush and toothpaste). It takes twice the time and effort to put them away later.

Let it go, let it go, let it go. It's always the season to give. Why store an unused bed in the garage when it can provide a place for someone to sleep at a local homeless shelter? The clothes, shoes and coats you no longer wear can help keep someone stay warm when there is no heat.

Recycle the miscellaneous paper products lying around your house, including junk mail, kids' homework, and empty cardboard boxes. You'll probably empty a huge portion of the garage and/or attic and definitely help the environment.

For more on Humes' organizational ideas, visit clutterqueen.com.

GET ORGANIZED



Designed

Get your act together in the most stylish ways

By Denise Gee

Ever wonder why the houses featured in magazines look like they've never had to accommodate stacks of paperwork, a tangle of re-charging cell phones or a landfill of toys? Usually it's because the owners (or stylists) have hidden every trace of real life just before the shoot. Believe us, folks, that stuff is there—somewhere. But it is possible to have beautifully organized chaos. Here are some our favorite products meant to help you achieve just that.



Bound for glory

It's refreshing to see that binders haven't been ignored in the modern design movement. These, from Russell+Hazel, feature striking graphic patterns to dress up your workspace. And, with reinforced corners, Davey board exteriors, dry-erase interiors, laminated spines, and rubberband closures, they'll be durable enough for everyday use. Each 1½-inch ring binder holds 275 sheets and is made from recycled materials. $24; russellandhazel.com or 888/254-5837.



Slim shady

Keys, notepads, cell phones and the like are the curse of kitchen counters everywhere. This Wall Message Center from Diamond Logix storage solutions sets out to discreetly hide all your necessities. The 3-inch deep cabinet, ideally designed to work with Diamond Cabinets, features a dry-erase board on the inside of the cabinet door to write notes or a magnetic photo frame. There are also hooks, and clearly contained shelving for holding pads, phones and the like. Each cabinet is 12 inches wide and comes in heights of 30, 36, and 42 inches; $255 to $355; diamondcabinets.com.

to de-clutter



Birds-eye view

Office supplies needn't look like Pentagon cast-offs; in fact, they can be useful and stylish. This Room Service Home office caddy, an homage to a Victorian birdcage, features an aged black finish and three shelves for stacking desk necessities in your favor. $149; roomservicehome.com or 800/588-1170.

Up and at 'em

Bunk beds are perfect for children's rooms—not only because they can harbor toys in the top bunk (when not in use by a sleepover friend), but also because they can allow for a youth desk underneath. We love the mod look of this Uffuzi model, here in orange and ebony. It's also green—material-wise, at least—because it's made from sustainable wood with non-toxic finishes. For ages 6 and up. About $1,850; argington.com.





Neat-oh

Tax time and the livin' ain't easy. The solution? Try NeatReceipts, a sleek mobile scanning and digital filing system for both PCs and Macs. It uses innovative software to read and file business cards, receipts and other documents so they can be instantly accessible. You can even export the data into Excel, Quicken, QuickBooks and TurboTax. About $200; neatco.com or 866/632-8732.

Shining moments

Your neighbors will certainly have garage envy if you clean up your act with this stainless steel Viper 304 system from Sears. The modular component system features a variety of storage options, many conveniently on wheels. It's sold as a five-piece combo (about $1,700) or as separate units starting from $130; sears.com or 800/349-4358.





Hidden asset

We've come to accept that cords have to take up a lot of needed room on bedside table, but the editors at Better Homes and Gardens say it's time to think differently. Working with Universal Furniture, the magazine's design team has devised a variety of furnishings that solve problems as well as look great. This American Inspirations bedside table (#858360) has a lift-top back section for handling and hiding a variety of cords and other items you want out of sight; About $550; bhgfurniture.com or 877/804-5535.

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Decorator in Chief

Cover Story

Tapped by the Obamas to outfit their private White House residence, decorator Michael S. Smith gives *Spaces* an exclusive glimpse of his own Bel Air home and his sophisticated but comfortable style

By Denise Gee



"The best houses, or rooms for that matter, are a little unpredictable—they have a life of their own," says Michael Smith, shown with his beloved Labradoodles, Sport and Jasper. "Objects come in and out. The character evolves. You don't want to over-process and direct. You want to let the house unfold."

On the L.A. scene and beyond, Michael S. Smith has been the "it" designer who's scored many a coup working in the houses of Steven Spielberg, Michelle Pfeiffer, Cindy Crawford, Dustin Hoffman and Rupert Murdoch. But the California native became a household name on Jan. 13. That's when first lady Michelle Obama announced that she'd chosen him to redecorate the family's private quarters in the East Wing of the White House. Smith reportedly got the gig for his family-friendly design balanced with a flair for global-minded, old-world chic. (For more, see "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," page 31.)

Smith's path to highest office of accolades began at age 10, when he became fixated on redecorating his room. Within a decade he

was studying at L.A.'s Otis College of Art and Design as well as London's Victoria & Albert Museum. And at age 19, he landed a coveted job with the great John Saladino in New York. Several years later Smith began to make inroads into A-list homes, and by 2002 had made it into Architectural Digest's list of top 100 designers.

Nowadays, Smith divides his time between California and New York, overseeing his eponymous 26-member interior design business (which includes eight other designers). He's also involved in a number of commercial ventures, including his furniture and fabric lines for Jasper; a fabric and leather collection with Cowtan & Tout; and bath collections for Kohler's Kallista brand and tile for its Ann Sacks line. Meanwhile, there are licensing agreements with a host of other companies, from lighting to home fragrances. Needless to say, the man is busy.

So what does his house in Bel Air look like? Few people except his closest friends and clients get the chance see the 4,800-square-foot home in person. But Smith has opened its doors—and those of many others he's decorated (including homes in Santa Monica, Santa Barbara, Carbon Beach, Encinal Bluffs and Santa Ynez)—in his most recent book *Michael S Smith Houses* (Rizzoli, $50), written by Christine Pittel and shot by a number of leading photographers.

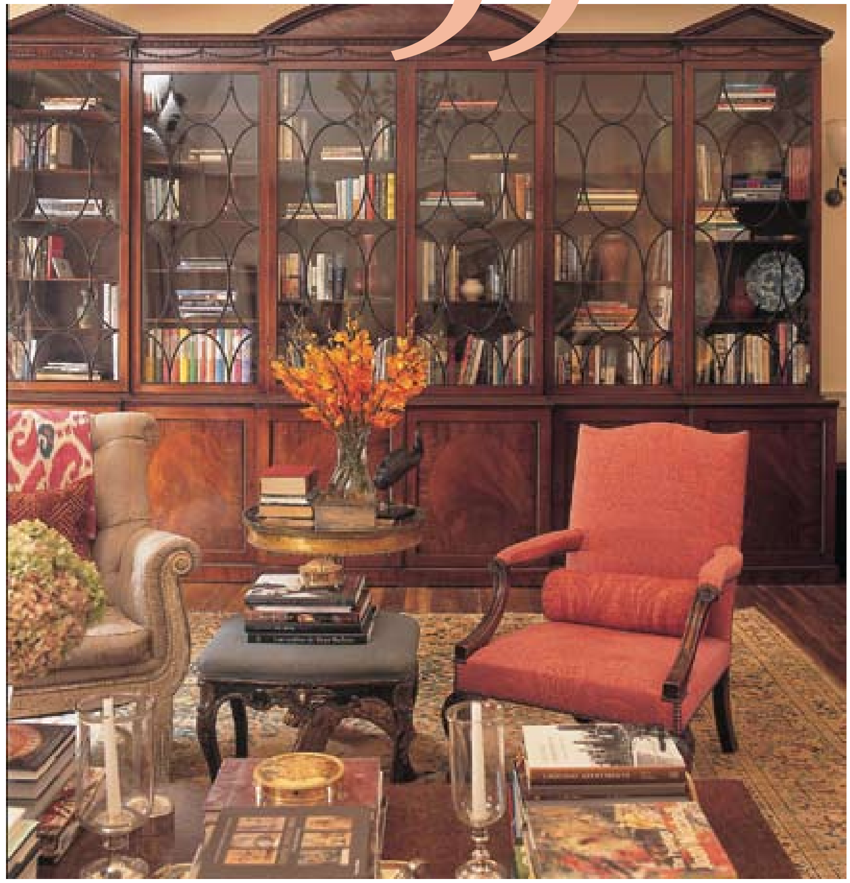
Growing up around Hollywood has undoubtedly affected his style. "Designing a house is a bit like the movies because you're making up stories," says Smith, 44. It's also all about listening. "I've become a very good therapist over the years, and I can tell what people really want, which is different than what they think they want. It's as if I'm directing a movie that was written by someone else. I have to take their vision and turn it into three-dimensional reality."

In an exclusive collaboration, Smith welcomes *Southern California Spaces* into his home—and shares thoughts about its design.





I wanted a big, classically proportioned drawing room. [Architect] Oscar and I designed it specifically to accommodate a 15-foot-long Gillows bookcase, made in mahogany after a design by Robert Adam. Robert and Richard Gillow were a father-and-son team who ran a thriving furniture business in Lancaster and London, England, during the 18th century. The beautifully carved Georgian armchair is covered in museum-red Fortuny fabric.



I wanted a fireplace in the entrance hall because it instantly makes me feel as if I'm in Oxfordshire [England]. Everything from the limestone floor to the lime-washed ceiling is done in various shades of white—very simple and severe. Creamy white paint—Farrow & Ball's White Tie 2002—picks out the fine lines of the columned cornice and the pediments over the doors.

In John Fowler's English houses, the rooms were often a delicious pinky melon to create a sense of warmth. But the light in California is already so apricot-y that the walls had to be paler. We mixed a little terra cotta dust into the Venetian plaster to give it a blush. The palette is monochromatic. There are 10 or 12 different textures in the room—Venetian plaster, the Turkish travertine floor, a woven straw rug—but only one color. Even the painting above the fireplace, by Beatrice Caracciolo, is white, with a stone-like texture. The objects on the mantel are very early Bactrian ritual vessels made of alabaster.





The big question in the dining room was whether we should open it to the kitchen, given the fact that it's a narrow space and we couldn't make it any larger. But I really did want an actual dining room, so we kept it intact. Now, all I had to do was make it magical. I knew I was going to use hand-painted chinoiserie wallpaper from de Gournay, because I love it and it adds such depth to a room. When you're looking through flowering branches to brightly painted birds, you get a sense of a vista beyond the four walls. It plays with your whole sense of perception.

I hung a George II giltwood over-mantel mirror on one wall and a large-scale photograph—a view of Florence by Massimo Vitale—on the other. It reads as a modern reinterpretation of an Old Master painting and keeps the room from becoming too ponderous. I bought the chandelier in Florence with the proviso that they take off all the pink glass flowers. I put candles in it and use it all the time. The sconces hold candles as well. I think there is nothing more romantic than dining by candlelight. The only electric light in the room comes from a pair of lamps by the mirror.

The table is an English Regency piece made out of particularly splendid mahogany. "Good timbers," as they say in the trade. It's surrounded by the Tyler chairs from my Jasper collection, upholstered in beautiful silk velvet. It's just the sort of thing I love—a petroleum blue-green, peacock-feather kind of color. I like the way it plays off all the neutrals—the paper-bag color in the wallpaper, the cream curtains. It's a fabric that's bright and pretty during the day. Then at night, it turns dark and inky and becomes more dramatic and mysterious.



This extraordinary chair is probably Baltic or Northern European. I bought it at Therien & Co., with the thought of using it for a client but I liked it so much I kept it for myself.

Mr. Smith goes to Washington

Michael Smith is obligatorily mum on his plans to decorate the Obama family's private quarters at the White House, an area not subject to design restrictions. But at the recent Design San Francisco 2009 event, he did share this: "It's an extraordinary honor, which even I haven't come to grips with, especially for a family I have such respect for. In 10 years I can talk about it, but not now."

Well, that doesn't stop us from talking about it, right?

This we know: Michelle Obama released a statement praising Smith for his "family-friendly style." According to The Washington Post, Smith plans to tackle the bedrooms of Sasha and Malia first, and has begun shopping at kid-focused "everyday retail stores."

Buying off the shelf is a way "of taking the formality and stiffness out of very grand rooms," Smith shares in his recent book *Houses*. For a Santa Barbara home featured in the book, for example, he purchased 200 Indian bedspreads from Urban Outfitters, "chopped them up and put them on the walls and ceiling and used them as curtains and upholstery in the pool house." As Smith puts it, "One of the secrets of good decorating is not to be afraid to be simple. Sometimes all you need is a jute rug from Pottery Barn."

Mrs. Obama walks the same walk. As it's been noted in the press, she's apt to sport an everywoman Gap getup one day and don a gorgeous Narciso Rodriguez number the next. By all accounts, it may be a match made in heaven.

Smith's design work at the White House, however, is unlikely to be on the same scale as the controversial $1.2 million office renovation of former Merrill Lynch CEO John Thain. In fact, Smith has a budget of only $100,000.

"The kitchen opens to the pantry and the laundry room. I love my BlueStar RNB Heritage Classic range, with six burners, two extra-large ovens, a professional-style raised griddle, and an infrared broiler—but let's just say I'm not the one who usually cooks on it."





"This kitchen, with a barrel-vaulted ceiling and old-fashioned cabinetry, feels as if it should come with a butler. In movies like "Gosford Park," I'm always looking at all the back-of-the-house stuff, the staff rooms. I wanted to play up the idea that this was a great old service kitchen—masculine English, not pretty English. It's smaller than I would have liked—I was restricted by the size of the old floor plan—but it's very functional. The glass-fronted refrigerator and glass-fronted cabinets also help, because they give you a sense that there's more depth. With solid-door cabinets and a solid refrigerator, you would have felt much more closed in. The hanging lights are from Ann-Morris Antiques. Oscar Shamamian and Joseph Singer designed the hood, with an antique pewter finish. Very Jules Verne meets the Industrial Revolution. The floor is reclaimed fumed brown oak from Baba, a company in North Carolina that sells fine antique floors. The kitchen opens to the breakfast room, just beyond."





"It may be unfashionable these days to define rooms instead of leaving it all one giant unformed space, but I think humans like pleasing geometries and regular shapes. The breakfast room is an octagon, just because I think it's pretty. There are five pairs of French doors, and we leave them open all the time—a standard part of the deal in California. The dogs run in and out. It's like a little temple in the garden. I have the pleasant sense of eating outside, while still being shielded from the direct sunlight. With the curtains drawn at night, you get a lovely tented effect. The fabric is Moghul Panel hemp, in burgundy, designed for my Jasper collection. The William IV rosewood table seats four, in George III mahogany chairs. The wallpaper is my own Irina Check for Cowtan & Tout. It just finishes off the space."



It was quite a job to piece together a pile of 18th century hemlock paneling and make it fit this particular room, but it was definitely worth the effort. The paneling adds instant history and makes it feel like a gentleman's retreat. The sofa is upholstered in a Madeleine Castaing stripe with an Indian quilt from John Robshaw tucked over the back. I made absolutely no attempt to hide the TV. I rather like the contrast of the sleek flat-screen Sony and the gilt-and-marble table.

Beds are for lounging, and I always make them super-comfortable, with plenty of pillows and a canopy. In my bedroom, the canopy bed is hung with curtains made of a fabric I designed, Indian Flower hemp, in blue. I couldn't find the perfect four-poster bed, but I found these Georgian posts and built a bed around them. Of course, it had to have a canopy. If you're going to spend a third of your life in bed, it might as well have a sense of ceremony. There's something special about a four-poster bed. It takes me back to being a kid playing in a fort, and fits in with my royalist fantasies. The monogrammed bed linens are by Porthault. The cushion on the floor is meant for my dogs, but you can guess where they inevitably end up. The carpet is a very old Sultanabad, with all those blues I adore.




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"The centerpiece is definitely the Town tub with old-fashioned fittings, all part of my collection for Kallista. What I had in the back of my head was the kind of English Edwardian temple of bathing that you'd find at a hotel like Claridge's in London. The space was too limited for a dressing room and a master bath, so I had to combine the two, and put the tub in the center of the dressing room. I designed the tub and the fixtures myself. It feels very gentlemanly, with an ebonized tea trolley right next to it for towels and magazines. The tub is oriented toward the view. In summer, I open the French doors and feel as if I'm bathing outside."




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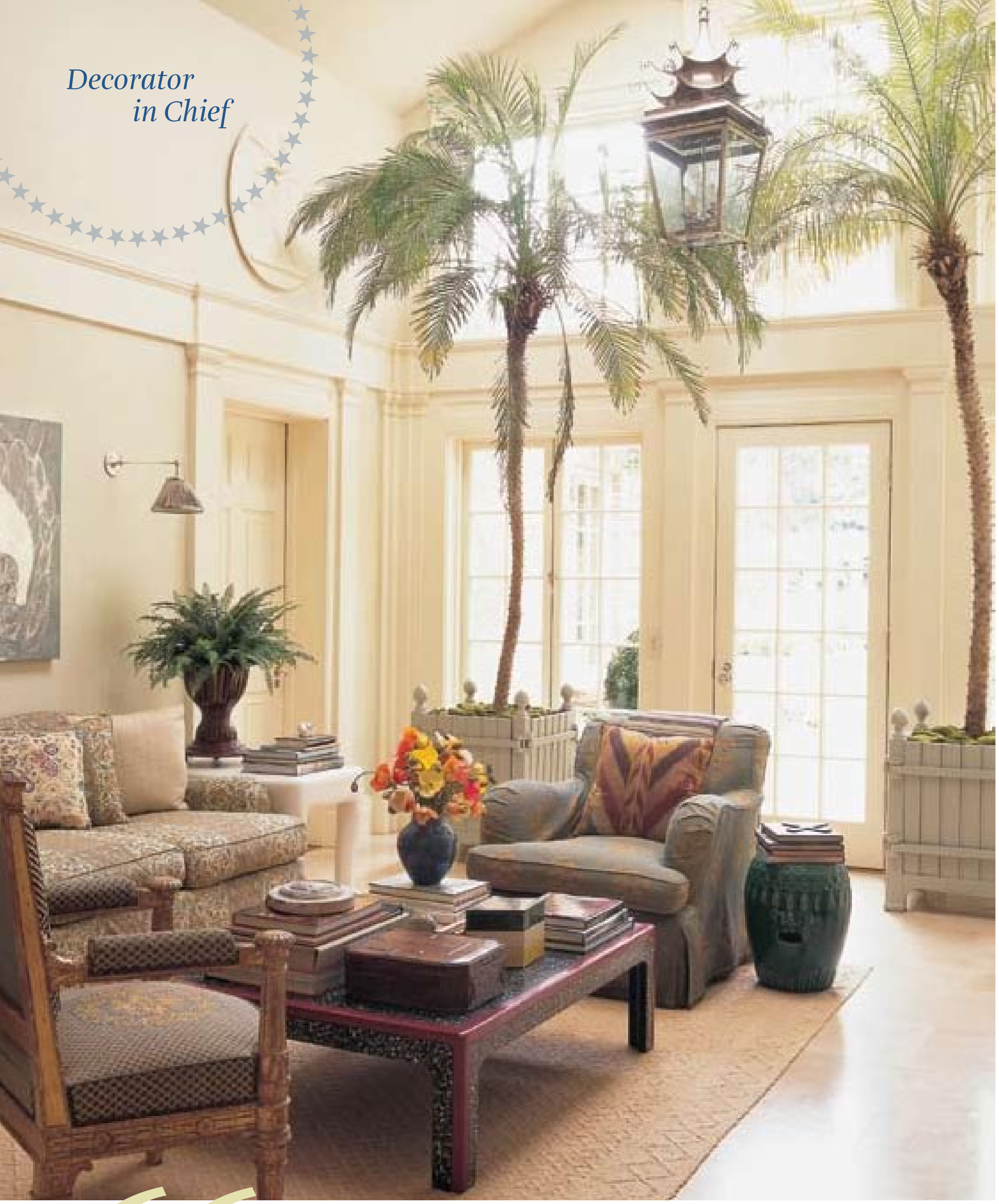
"I wanted something bold and overwhelming to give the space a sense of drama and found it in a painting by a student of Peter Paul Rubens. It brings a lot of movement and color into the room and somehow revalues the whole space. A big painting in a small room fools you into thinking the room is larger. The whole question of scale is one of the most fascinating subjects in design. I don't quite know how to predict what is going to be right, but I sure can tell when it's wrong. I put a nice big chair right in front of the painting, which also shocks a few people. But if a room is completely geared to a painting, it turns into an art gallery. And then you get that drive-in movie effect that I see in so many beach houses, where every piece of furniture faces the view. That's crazy.

I like to make up a bed with a variety of linens. The red-and-white embroidered sheets and shams are Moroccan and the pillow in front is covered in an African textile. The wallpaper is my Irina Check for Cowtan & Tout."



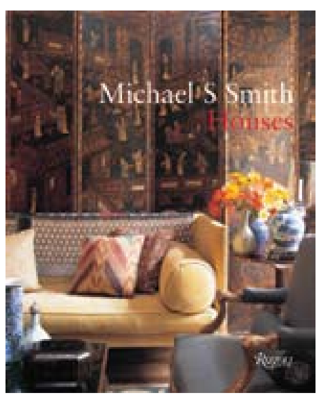


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"The double-height sunroom, with its wall of French doors, gives you the sensation of being outside while you're still in the house. The furnishings are eclectic, to say the least. Look at that quirky white plaster John Dickinson table to the left of the blue chair. The coffee table is another unusual piece. I bought it in Brussels but it's probably Japanese. The black lacquer surface is scattered with bits of mother-of-pearl and trimmed in red. I've never seen another like it.

It's a sitting room that really feels more like an indoor courtyard, since you're sharing the space with 15-foot-tall palm trees. The floor is Turkish travertine, which continues out onto the terrace so you're meant to feel half-in, half-out."



Excerpts from Michael S Smith Houses*—and photography by John Canziani, Grey Crawford, John Ellis, Lisa Romerein and Simon Upton—used by permission from Rizzoli Books.*

Smith & Lesson

When *Spaces* recently caught up with Michael Smith at Design San Francisco 2009, here's what we gleaned:

What are you into these days?

I'm obsessed with flowers right now. You used to see lots of them in the '70s so I don't know if I'm too late or too early, but there's something about them that is so fresh. Also, I'm a big wallpaper person. One of my absolute favorites is Chinese wallpaper. It's so unique and so beautiful.

And your favorite room?

My bedroom. For me, having a four-poster bed (with canopy) is magical. There's something majestic about climbing into it. A bed can add such a sense of drama.

And your favorite designers?

There are too many to name. I respect Albert Hadley. And I've always been a fan of David Hicks' bathrooms. He did extraordinary baths that had a connection to the outdoors.

What are the hardest rooms for you to design?

Kitchens and baths. How do you take the spirit of the house and translate it into these rooms? Do you take a Viking stove and put it in a French chateau or a house in the South Hamptons?

Any words of wisdom?

Start with the spirit of the house to promote the feel—not just arrange furniture. In other words, don't just design around a rug. Figure out what is magical to you and bring that to the room. Also, be true to the architecture.

— Kris Carber


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Chef Andre Guerrero draws on his family's love of myriad cuisines to woo patrons to the Valley



Eclectic to the Max

By Natalie Haughton Photos by David Crane

First trying his hand at spaghetti at age 9 and mastering pastries at 10, Andre Guerrero was simply destined to become a chef. Luckily for Guerrero's followers, the lessons learned in his family's kitchen are displayed nightly at Max, the popular chef-owned bistro on the San Fernando Valley's restaurant row. Named for the younger of his two sons, Max specializes in what Guerrero calls "contemporary Los Angeles cuisine," an eclectic combination of Asian, Latin American and French influences.

"There is so much going on here with food and culture,

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"I knew that in order to survive I had to do something different."

and it comes at you from every direction," says Guerrero, who was born in the Philippines. "What happens is that we filter all that information and interpret it on the plate."

Guerrero works hard to live up to the rave reviews Max received when it opened in 2002. When the economy and business slowed last summer, Guerrero closed briefly to give both his decor and menu a makeover. "I knew that in order to survive I had to do something different," he says.

He transformed the bland beige dining room into a comfortable bistro, where framed mirrors now grace the walls to reflect new black lacquered tables, snowy white napkins and red French doors. He also reduced prices and added less-expensive items to the menu. The new dishes are still infused with Guerrero's special touch, such as soft tacos stuffed with spiced ground lamb, chilled



Warm colors and eclectic accents, top, create a welcoming atmosphere for diners. Ahi tuna towers, above, are among the most popular items on the Max menu.

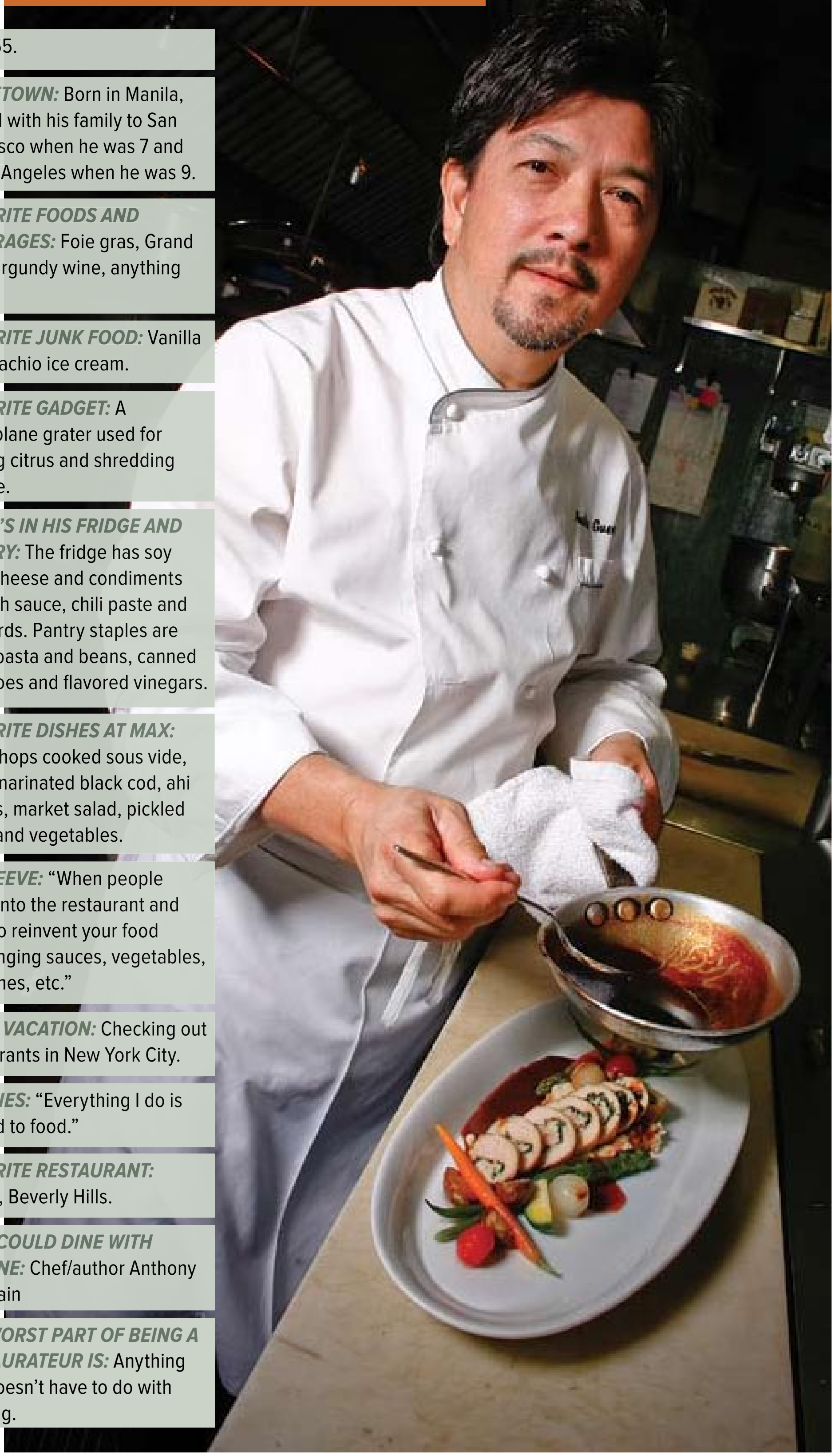






SPOTLIGHT ON...

ANDRE GUERRERO



AGE: 55.

HOMETOWN: Born in Manila, moved with his family to San Francisco when he was 7 and to Los Angeles when he was 9.

FAVORITE FOODS AND BEVERAGES: Foie gras, Grand Cru Burgundy wine, anything pork.

FAVORITE JUNK FOOD: Vanilla or pistachio ice cream.

FAVORITE GADGET: A Microplane grater used for zesting citrus and shredding cheese.

WHAT'S IN HIS FRIDGE AND PANTRY: The fridge has soy milk, cheese and condiments like fish sauce, chili paste and mustards. Pantry staples are dried pasta and beans, canned tomatoes and flavored vinegars.

FAVORITE DISHES AT MAX: Pork chops cooked sous vide, miso-marinated black cod, ahi towers, market salad, pickled fruits and vegetables.

PET PEEVE: "When people come into the restaurant and want to reinvent your food — changing sauces, vegetables, garnishes, etc."

IDEAL VACATION: Checking out restaurants in New York City.

HOBBIES: "Everything I do is related to food."

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: Spago, Beverly Hills.

IF HE COULD DINE WITH ANYONE: Chef/author Anthony Bourdain

THE WORST PART OF BEING A RESTAURATEUR IS: Anything that doesn't have to do with cooking.

ramen noodles made with poached chicken and hanger steak prepared with mustard-shallot sauce. Seasonal changes showcasing the best offerings from local farmers markets add daily variety to the menu.

But even in re-creating Max, Guerrero chose to retain his customers' favorites, including the ahi tuna towers on the appetizer menu and the apple galette for dessert. Top choices for entrees include miso-marinated black cod, Szechuan peppercorn salmon and beef short ribs, which are prepared both grilled and braised.

The variety in the menu reflects Guerrero's upbringing in a family of 12 that revered good food. "My parents, who owned a couple of restaurants, were fascinated with food," he recalls. "We grew up eating very eclectic food—and many different kinds." And at home, he says, the family dinners went well beyond standard meat-and-potatoes fare.

"My grandmother was French, and my father grew up eating French food," he says. "My mother, the main cook, grew up eating Spanish food. We always had baccalá (salted cod), a lot of stews, Chinese, French, Filipino and Spanish food—and, almost always, rice. My father was always baking at home and taught me all the classic pastries."

Although he was interested in food and loved to cook, Guerrero pursued an art degree at the University of California-Los Angeles. After graduation, however, he decided against a career as an artist and instead took a cook's job at Lawry's California Center—a position that sealed his professional fate. After a year at the landmark eatery, he became the chef at his parents' Cafe Le Monde in Glendale, where he learned how to run his own kitchen.

Guerrero built on his experience and reputation during stints in the kitchens of Bernard's in the Biltmore Hotel and Linq in Hollywood. He opened the 250-seat Duet in Glendale, which garnered praise but eventually closed.

With the opening of Max, Guerrero

seemed to hit on the perfect combination of location, size and cuisine. He followed up in 2003 with Señor Fred, an upscale Mexican-themed dining spot named for his older son (which he's since sold). In 2006, Guerrero opened The Oinkster in Eagle Rock, a casual eatery that specializes in "slow fast food"—such as house-cured pastrami, roasted pork and freshly ground beef burgers.

Guerrero says he's tried to infuse all of his restaurants with a philosophy developed over four decades in the kitchen. "In the world of food, there is always something new and delicious to be discovered," he says. "Let's go, find it, and bring it to the table."



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RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED?	Yes
DINNER WITH WINE FOR TWO	About $90



Herbed Chicken with Crimini Mushrooms

Serves 4

4 (8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast halves

Salt and pepper to taste

Herb Mix (recipe follows)

4 strips bacon

1 tablespoon canola oil

Chardonnay Sauce (recipe follows)

2 tablespoons butter

1 cup fresh crimini mushrooms

Butterfly chicken breasts and season inside with salt and pepper. Spread Herb Mix atop each breast and roll, jelly-roll fashion, with mixture inside. Salt and pepper outside. Wrap with a bacon strip and secure with a toothpick.

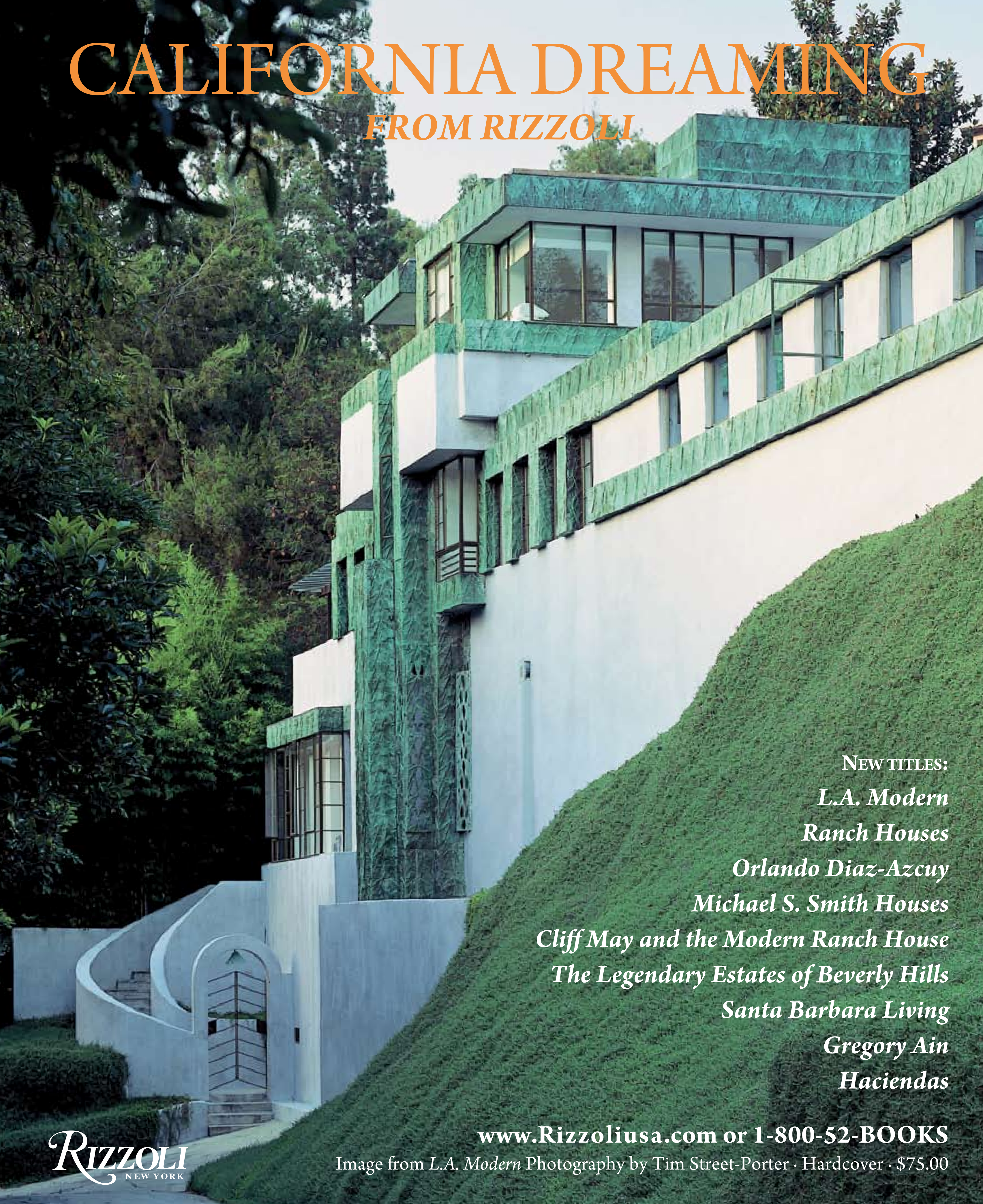
In a large skillet, heat canola oil until hot. Sear chicken, turning frequently to evenly brown. Reduce heat, cover and cook about 10 minutes, until chicken is cooked through. Remove from heat and let chicken rest.

Meanwhile, prepare Chardonnay Sauce; set aside.

To serve, heat butter in a skillet until hot. Add mushrooms and sauté until all liquid evaporates, about 5 minutes. Stir in Chardonnay Sauce. Bring to a simmer and keep warm. Remove toothpick and slice each chicken roll into 5 medallions. Arrange on a bed of mashed potatoes on a warm dinner plate. Spoon sauce over chicken and accompany with assorted seasonal vegetables.

HERB MIX: Heat 2 tablespoons canola oil in a skillet until hot. Add 2 tablespons minced shallots and sauté gently until translucent. Add 1 bunch fresh Italian parsley, stems removed and chopped, and 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon; cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.

CHARDONNAY SAUCE: Heat 2 tablespoons butter in a saucepan or skillet until hot. Add 1/4 cup chopped shallots and sauté. Add 1 cup sliced fresh crimini mushrooms and 1 bunch fresh Italian parsley, stems removed and chopped, and continue to saute 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Do not let brown. Add 2 cups chardonnay wine. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until volume is reduced by half. Add 2 cups chicken stock. Bring to a boil and cook until reduced by half. Add 1 cup heavy whipping cream. Bring to a simmer and reduce volume by half. Remove from heat and strain through a fine strainer. Set aside until ready to use.


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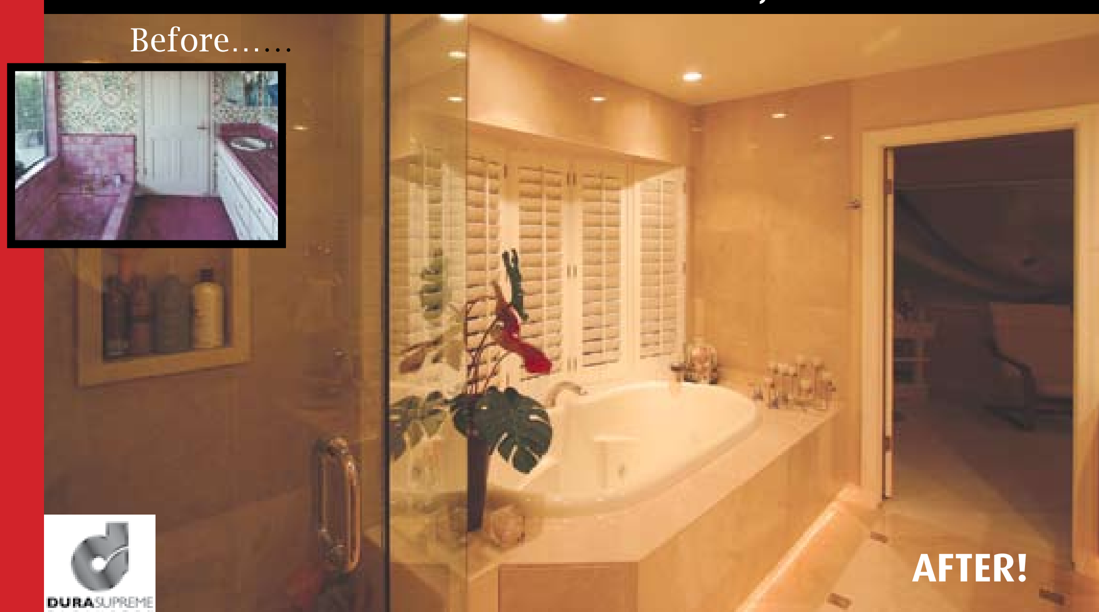
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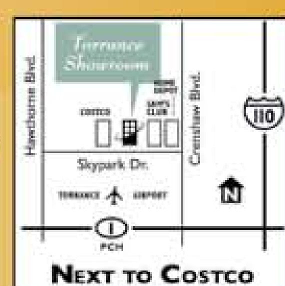
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L.A.'s where the art is

New venue welcomes West Coast's biggest art fair

By
Barbara
Jones

Drawn by a spectacular array of 15,000 pieces of art, patrons, celebrities and aficionados gathered Jan. 21 for a benefit gala launching the 14th annual Los Angeles Art Show.

Strolling through the cavernous West Hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center, the 2,800 guests got a preview of what 35,000 other visitors would see during the four-day event—a vast offering of paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, videos and prints created by emerging artists and the masters.

And instead of overwhelming the creations, the 150,000-square-foot venue showcased the encyclopedic collection,

Martin Sheen, right, best-known for his starring role in TV's "The West Wing," visits with actor son Emilio Estevez and business consultant Treanne Gomes..





Actress Rhea Perlman, left, and friends take a break from browsing at the Los Angeles Art Show's opening night party.



Veteran actor Victor Garber ("Eli Stone," "Milk") strolls the halls of the Los Angeles Convention Center.



Andrea Fiuczynski, left, president of Christie's Los Angeles, and a friend were among the 2,800 guests at the benefit.



Actress Payton McDavitt





PHOTOS: JANA CRUDER, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

McDAVITT PHOTO: DAVID KOIZUMI

which included a sculpture garden, "found paper" and wire works by Maddy Le Mel and a 10-by-24-foot kaleidoscope canvas by Gabriel Del Ponte that greeted visitors as they entered the hall.

The gala benefitted Inner-City Arts, a 20-year-old organization that offers at-risk children the opportunity to experience the power of creativity; the Environmental Media Association, which supports the entertainment community's efforts to influence environmental awareness; and the iconic Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Lending their support to these efforts, the guests included actors Martin Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Victor Garber, Eriq La Salle, Robert LaSardo, Rhea Perlman and Hunter Tylo; Andrea Fiuczynski, president of Christie's Los Angeles; David Martinon, the French consul general in Los Angeles, art patron Billie Weisman; and Olga Garay, director of the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.



Actor Robert LaSardo, right, and friends join in the festivities.



Supporting the local arts community were Louis Stern, left, owner of Louis Stern Fine Arts, David Martinon, the French consul general in Los Angeles, and wife Karen Martinon.



Lifetime Achievement Award recipient
Moshe Softie autographs a book for a fan..

Below, from left: Leslie Nathan, executive director of the AIA-SFV, visits with WWCOT architects Tom Cestarte, Rudy DeChellis and Vince Bertollini.





AIA member Richard Gemigniani, left, displays his award-winning design to landscape architect Jeffrey Smith.



Above, from left: Leslie Nathan greets Moshe Safdie and Uri and Myna Herscher.

AIA honors Valley's top architects

By Barbara Jones

Like the architect who designed it, the Skirball Cultural Center is dynamic and creative—an inspiring combination of culture and history, education and the arts.

It's fitting, then, that the San Fernando Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects chose the Skirball as the venue for honoring its architect, Moshe Softie, with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Opened in 1996 at a cost of $65 million, the Skirball complex houses an auditorium, conference center and a museum of Jewish history. (Softie's other works include the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Israel, and the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Ga.)

"Moshe Safdie's body of work has made an immense contribution to the built environment and to the architectural profession," said Sylvia Botero, this year's president of AIA-SFV. "His buildings have brought timeless architecture to the entire world.

"He is the creator of designs that will endure the test of time and will be passed on to many generations. His commitment to our profession is truly inspirational."

Softie was feted by 250 guests during the Jan. 31 banquet, where the AIA-SFV also recognized its members' best work.

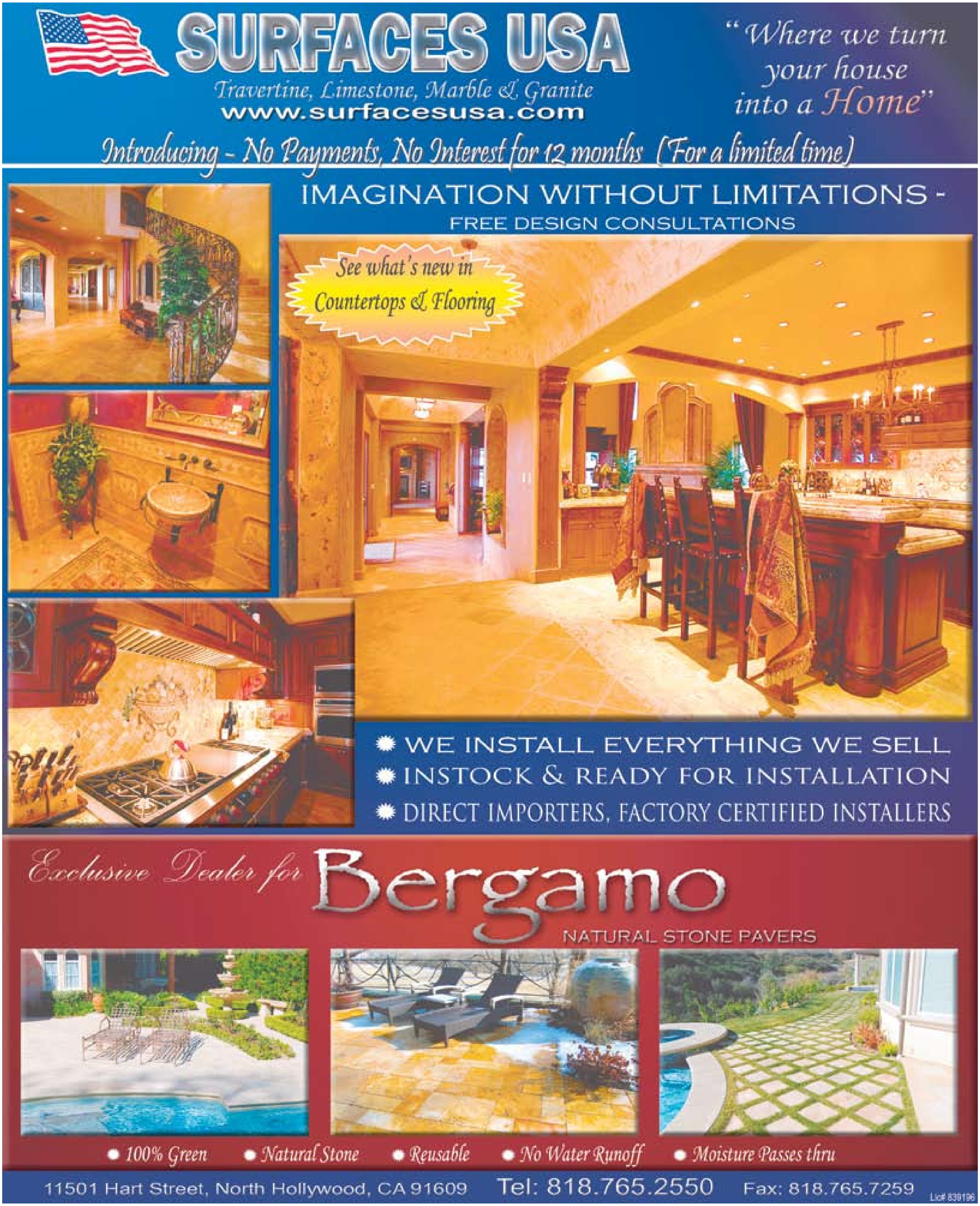
Presentations included an Honor Award to Jeffrey M. Kalban & Associates for the renovation of a home on Latigo Beach; a Merit Award to Richard Gemigniani for a home overlooking the Hollywood Bowl; and a Citation Award to Reveal Studio for a single-family residence in Glassell Park.

Other projects receiving special recognition included the Campbell Hall Arts Complex in North Hollywood, designed by Gensler & Associates; the Matador Bookstore addition at California State University-Northridge, designed by Harley Ellis Devereaux; and the LAPD Valley Bomb Squad Headquarters in Granada Hills and the Southern Division headquarters of the California Highway Patrol, both designed by WWCOT.

The evening opened with a cocktail reception, with music provided by AIA member Gus Duffy and his jazz combo, Mid Century Modern. The invocation was given by Uri Herscher, founding president and CEO of the Skirball.

PHOTOS: MICHAEL OWEN BAKER




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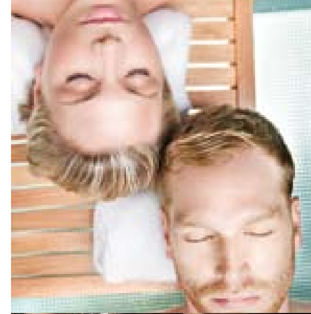


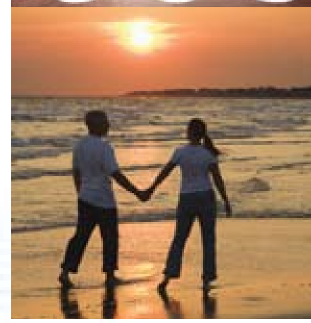
Palm Sunshine

Ray Chavez

The beach. A park. His own backyard. Everywhere he looks, artist Ray Chavez sees a painting. Stirred by the sights that others take for granted, the Los Angeles native uses oils and a palette knife to express his vision of life in California. The luminous light that inspired *Palm Sunshine* finds its way into other paintings in Chavez's portfolio, along with the dramatic rock formations of the local mountains and the vivid colors of city life. "Anything that moves me, I like to bring out. I try to connect with the viewer, to touch them in some kind of way," says Chavez, who describes his technique as "California impressionist." To see more of his work, visit rchavez.myexpose.com.

—Barbara Jones


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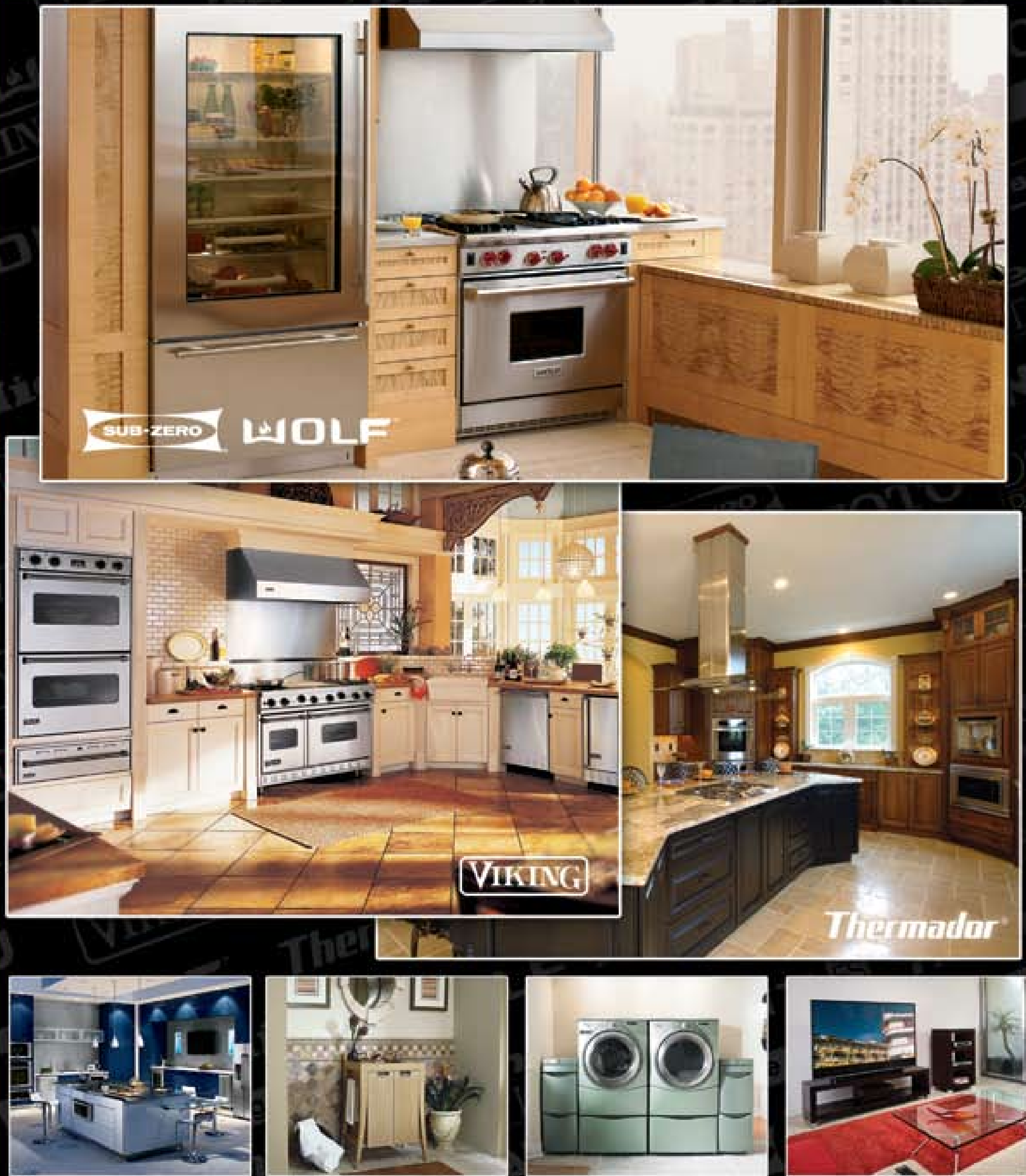



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